

# The Roles of Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge Teachers in Organizing Their Students Relationships with Social Networks

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## Abstract

In parallel to the improvements experienced in information and communication systems in recent years, any use of Internet, especially the social networks by children and adolescents has been noticed to be increasing gradually. Use of social networks that starts at early ages has exposed children to some dangers. For that reason, the responsibility for teachers and parents upon raising the awareness of students for the threats possible to be encountered on the internet and upon being a guide and role model appears. As in other different branches, the role of Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge (RCMK) teachers upon being a guide and role model has also gradually increased. Subsequent to this study, needs of Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge teachers on this issue could be determined, and necessary seminars could be prepared. In this period when we live with social networks, it seems important in terms of teachers to raise the awareness and be aware of their responsibilities on their students.

**Keywords:** Guide, Social network, Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge teacher, Responsibility

## 1. Introduction

Rapid expansion of social networks and their playing a big role in our lives have necessitated benefiting from social networks in education environments for teachers. As new technologies have developed, teachers have found themselves inside the social networks automatically. These technological methods have provided some conveniences for teachers as well as causing some problems.

Different definitions were offered on “social network.” Boyd and Ellison (2007) defined social network as social communities where people can create open profiles individually, can interact with their friends in their real life, and meet new people on the basis of their common areas of interest. Kuss and Griffiths (2011) described social networks as virtual environments where individuals interview and share with their real life friends or other individuals they communicated only in virtual environment from the open personal accounts they created as accessible to the public.

In general, social network services are established on friendship, kinship, interests and activities. However, this is not the single function of social network services. These networks provide several opportunities for individuals such as sharing information, establishing and developing relationships (Kwon and Wen, 2010). Virtual environments have become very appealing for the young day by day. However, friendships have been started to be kept through the virtual environments. Smart phones and tablet computers have provided internet world to be mobile. Social networks such as Facebook, My Space, Flickr and YouTube with Web 2.0 properties are among the mostly visited web sites. Social networks have not only been used for socializing and entertaining but also for accessing to information and carrying out a professional work. The properties such as cooperation, personalization, user-supported content supplement social networks provide have enhanced user experience and made these web sites more appealing (Tonta, 2009:158). One of the most well-known Web 2.0 applications is Facebook social network application (McLoughlin and Lee, 2008).

Facebook that is commonly used by the young was primarily created for Harvard students, and subsequently opened for the access of all. Since 2010, the number of users all around the world has exceeded 500 million, and has been indicated as one of the most technically successful Web 2.0 applications by web authorities (Bicen and Çavuş, 2010).

Social networks, in general, can be used to share the materials for supporting cooperative learning, research, discussion skills, examining, critical thinking and problem solving skills, to follow current events, news, people or groups, and to be included in discussion environments (Tiryakioglu and Erzurum, 2011). Social networks have also drawn the attraction of students and teachers and prominent environments such as Facebook and Twitter have been followed by students and teachers.

Most of the “social network” users’ including the young and students and their offering enhanced interaction opportunity for the users suggested the educational-based used of these environments. Social network sites’ having a vital importance in lives of students at any ages has aroused great interest among some educationalists (Selwyn, 2009: 79-86). For that reason, teachers should definitely be aware of social networks in order to enter into the world of new generation students. Furthermore, teachers have recently used social networks for educational purposes. When considered in educational context, Muijs et al. (2010:78) expressed social networks as having benefits such as developing schools, increasing the opportunities (such as cooperating with the firms), and resource allocation.

Upon teachers’ using the social network, Prensky (2001) mentioned that today’s technology will be created from “digital locals” including the individuals who learned the technology as learning the native language and grew up with technologies such as video games, digital music players, video cameras, mobile phones and internet. For that reason, Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge (RCMK) teachers as well as the teachers of other branches should accommodate themselves to the technological requirements of the century. Teachers who are required to follow all these new technological improvements have also the responsibility of being a guide for the students on this.

Teachers have many tasks upon being model to their students. Teachers are also required to be model upon how technology will be used in parallel with its improvement. Most of the researches carried out on social networks were related to social network addiction, studies carried out on responsibilities on social network could not be found much.

The purpose of this research was to investigate the roles of Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge teachers upon organizing the relationships of their students with social networks in terms of their responsibility of being a guide and to ask the views of RCMK teachers and to evaluate these. In our research, roles of RCMK teachers upon organizing the relationships of their students with social networks in terms of the responsibility of being a guide were investigated. At the end of the research, because of the lack of such studies in Turkey yet, this one will contribute to the review literature.

In this research, the role of Religious and Moral Education teachers as a responsibility to guide on organizing students’ relations with social networks is investigated. Sub-problems of the research were as below:

1. How often and for which reasons the participants may be using social network websites?
2. Are the participants aware of the threats that they may encounter into social networks?
3. Are there any solutions suggested from the participants in case of any threat they may encounter in social networks?
4. Do the participants have enough information about the threats that their students may encounter in social networks?
5. Do the participants believe that their students have responsibilities about the dangers they may face in social networks?
6. What do the participants think about the effects of social networks on moral improvements ?
7. Do the participants think that they have responsibilities to raise awareness among their students about probable unethical behaviours they may come through in social networks ?
8. With which other branch teachers can the participants cooperate about the threats students may encounter in social networks?

## 2. Method

In this research, case study as one of the qualitative research designs was used. According to Yildirim and Simsek (2006), case study is to reveal the results related to a specific case. It means searching one or more cases deeply. Namely, factors related to a case (environment, individuals, events, processes, etc.) are searched with an integrated

approach; and how these affect the situation and how these are affected from the relevant case are focused. In this research, roles of the teachers upon organizing the relationships of the students with social networks in terms of their responsibility of being a guide was tried to be investigated as the “case.” The study group included totally 20 volunteer RCMK teachers who could use social networks and who were chosen with criteria sampling method. In the special field of competence of the teacher training of RCMK, the capacity of guiding students to comprehend the moral values that have formed the social peace, play an important part. In other words, RCMK teachers are expected to guide their students’ moral improvements. Beside the problems faced on social networks, the ethical use of social networks and their guidance to act in that way have gained an importance. Therefore, in this research the study group has been selected among RCMK teachers. The interviews between May and June 2016 were made with the volunteer participation of RCMK teachers who actively used information-communication technologies. On privacy basis, real names of the pre-service teachers who participated into the research were not used, and cod names were entitled to the participants instead. During the interviews tape recorder has been used and each interview has lasted twenty minutes. Through the use of tape recorder, recorded interviews have been transcribed on writing state. The data of transcript has been respectively transferred to interviewer-interviewed form installed on computer. The data that have been collected, be coded in terms of their subjects.

Some demographical data related to the participants were presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The participants

Gender	f	%
Female	18	90
Male	2	10
Networks	f	%
Facebook	19	95
Twitter	11	55
Instagram	9	45
Time spent on social networks (years)	f	%
1-5 years	7	35
5-10 years	9	45
10 years and above	4	20
Time spent on social networks per day	f	%
Less than 1 hour	8	40
1-2 hours	10	50
2 hours and above	2	10
Purpose of using social networks	f	%
Communication	20	44
Research	13	29
Education	11	24
Sharing pictures	2	3

*Data Collection Tool:* The data were collected with personal information form and an interview form including 7 open-ended questions.

### 2.1 Demographical Information Form

The demographical data such as social networks used by the teachers in the study group of the research, total time spent on social network, social network use periods, purposes to use social network and type of used social networks were obtained using a data collection form. The reason of selecting RCMK teachers as study group remains on the fact that, these teachers have the main role of bringing moral and ethical values included in the Turkish National Education Curriculum.

### 2.2 Interview Questions

The interview questions that were developed by the researcher, revised and arranged asking for the opinions of 3 experts and prepared to investigate the roles of teachers upon organizing the relationships of students with social networks in terms of their responsibility of being a guide were as to the teachers using a semi-structured form, and the answers were collected by hand. Eight questions were asked to the teachers within the scope of the interview.

### 2.3 Analysis of Data:

The data obtained within the scope of the research were analyzed using content analysis method, and the results were reported. The interviews made by the permission of the teachers, and the notes were transferred into electronic environment, and the obtained data were evaluated depending upon "content analysis" method. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2005), the purpose of content analysis was to define the data, to code the data revealing the realities that were possible to be hidden in data, to organize the codes and theme, to define the findings and to report the results evaluating the data.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1 The Views upon Being Aware of the Threats Possible to be Encountered on Social Networks

The findings related to the views of RCMK teachers upon being aware of the threats possible to be encountered on social network web sites were presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The findings related to the views of RCMK teachers upon being aware of the threats possible to be encountered on social networks

Threat possible on social net works			
Cybercrimes (fraud, credit card fraud, fraud of account information, etc.)	20	50	
Privacy problems (Access to private information, threat, falsified news, etc.)	8	20	
Information pollution	5	12.5	
Time wasting	5	12.5	
Viruses	2	5	

As could be seen in Table 2, RCMK teachers expressed that they were aware of the threat possible to be encountered on social media, and these threats were grouped as cybercrimes, privacy problems, information pollution, time wasting and viruses. Examples of the expressions of RCMK teachers related to their views upon the threats possible to be experienced on social networks were as below;

- "...Identity fraud, fraud, counterfeit product sale, unwell correspondence."
- "Threats such as fraud of bank/credit card information, compromised privacy of private life, fraud, etc."
- "Dangers such as being defrauded, sexual abuse, easy access to personal information."
- "...I am aware of the threat. For example, cyber bullying, viruses, and most importantly, wrong information pollution."

### 3.2 Solution Suggestions Related to the Threats Possible to be Encountered on Social Networks

The findings related to the solution suggestions of RCMK teachers for the threats possible to be encountered on social networks were presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The findings related to the solution suggestions of RCMK teachers offered for the threats possible to be encountered on social networks

Solution suggestion about the threats	f	%
Conscious use	14	47
Avoidance	7	23
Appealing to legal process	4	14
Complaint to system-site administrators	3	10
No knowledge	2	6

As could be seen in Table 3, the suggestions RCMK teachers offered for the threats possible to be encountered on social networks were grouped as conscious using, avoidance, appealing to the legal process, and complaint to the system-website administrators. Furthermore, three RCMK teachers mentioned that they had no idea about the threats possible to be experienced on social media. Examples of the expressions RCMK teachers mentioned on suggestions for the threats possible to be encountered on social networks were as below;

- “The best solution is to avoid from social network as much as possible, to read books or have different hobbies ...”
- “Appealing to the security unit related to cybercrimes ...”
- “Yes, it is important to be a conscious user, not to lose control and take necessary precautions.”

### 3.3 Views of the Students upon Having Knowledge about the Dangers Possible to be Encountered on Social Networks

Thirteen of the RCMK teachers expressed that they had knowledge on threats possible to be encountered on social networks, 12 had knowledge partially, and 5 had no knowledge on the threats. Examples of the expressions RCMK teachers related to their views on their being aware of the threats possible to be encountered on social networks were as below;

- “Yes, unnecessary provocations, false news, not distinguishing virtual life and real life.”
- “Yes, fraud of bank/credit card information, compromised privacy of private life, fraud, etc.”
- “We can expose to verbal abuse though not physically. Our accounts can be taken over by the others, and used in bad faith.”

### 3.4 The Views Related to the Responsibilities of Teachers for the Threats Students were Possible to Encounter on Social Networks

Majority of RCMK teachers (80%, f=16) felt themselves responsible for the threats their students were possible to encounter on social networks. Some of the views related to the responsibilities of teachers for the threats their students could experience on social networks were as below;

- “Yes, we should also provide the parents be aware of the threats besides warning the students. Meanwhile, we also inform and warn the students besides the guidance seminars in our school.”
- “I consider that I have responsibilities, I should raise their awareness adequately. For healthy generations, this is our duty.”
- “Partly no, because this is mostly the interest area of the families. It is not possible for us to intervene if the families give permission, I can only warn against the dangers.”

### 3.5 The Views Related to the Social Network Use of Students' Affecting Their Moral Development

Nearly all of RCMK teachers (95%, f=19) considered that social networks negatively affected the moral development of the students. Some of the views of RCMK teachers related to their students social network use's affecting their moral development were as below;

- “...It affects negatively. They see any kinds of slang and swear words, and advertisements full of immoral visual materials. Social network is one of the reasons of moral collapse.”
- “Students can access to violence videos that are not possible to see on TV easily, or are subjected to the shares of people who make unconscious shares, and start to consider this violence as normal.”
- “Definitely no. Social networks are very problematic in terms of popularizing the false and taking the false as a

model."

### *3.6 Views of Teachers about Their Responsibilities that They must Take to Raise Awareness of Their Students about the Possible Unethical Behaviours on Social Networks*

Nearly all of RCMK teachers (95%, f=19) considered that they had responsibilities of raising the awareness of their students related to the immoral behaviors they could experience on social networks. The views of RCMK teachers related to their responsibilities upon raising the awareness of children for the immoral behaviors possible to be experienced on social networks were as below;

- "Not only teachers, but also the parents are responsible on this. They should establish communication with their children instead of giving a tablet in order to spend their time, and they should express the threats of computers."
- "Of course, teachers have responsibility. They should emphasize that internet and social networks are required to be used consciously. Because one of the most important duties of teachers is to protect their students against all visible and non-visible dangers besides basic education."
- "Yes, education is not only a one-sided process. I believe that we, teachers, are the most efficient and responsible people for protecting the children from harms subsequent to parents."

### *3.7 The Views Related to the Cooperation with Teachers of Other Branches for the Threats Students were Possible to Encounter on Social Networks*

RCMK teachers considered that they could cooperate with Information Technologies teachers (50%, f=10) and Guidance teachers (40%, f=8) against the threats students could experience on social networks. Views of RCMK teachers related to the cooperation with the teachers of other branches against the threats students were possible to encounter on social networks were as below;

- "I cooperate with information technologies teachers and computer teachers and also with guidance teachers because they were expert on this, more precisely they had more relation with social networks and computers, and have better understanding on psychology and feelings of students."
- "I cooperate with guidance teacher because a guidance teacher can render better service on issues related to the private life of the students."

## **4. Conclusions and Suggestions**

All of the RCMK teachers who participated into the research were aware of the threats (fraud, privacy problems, information pollution, etc.) they could encounter on social networks. For that reason, RCMK teachers were possible to be mentioned as having adequate knowledge on social networks.

Solutions suggestions of RCMK teachers related to the threats possible to be encountered on social networks were "conscious using, avoidance, and appealing to legal processes." Some of the RCMK teachers expressed that they had no knowledge on dangers possible to be experienced on social networks. In this sense, awareness of teachers could be raised through the seminars organized on the issue. Over and unconscious internet use can cause social and moral dangers such as fraud, sexual abuse, pornography, physical disorders such as muscle, eye pains and headache, and mental disorders such as anxiety, sadness, depression and intolerance (İlhan, 2012).

Because social network websites are flexible and user-friendly, these can be used more easily rather than the other education management systems. It provides conveniences for feedbacks due to several students and researchers' creating a community following simpler steps, and making shares among each other. RCMK teachers mentioned that they had responsibilities upon dangers their students were possible to encounter on social networks.

RCMK teachers who participated into the research considered that social network use of their students negatively affected their moral development. In this sense, they could organize in-class and out-of-class activities in order to provide their students acquire moral behaviors in social network use. It has been believed that social networks both facilitated and made lives of university students difficult who experienced depression, adaptation problems, and problems in their in-family relationships, friendship relationships and some academic problems (Erkan, Cihangir Çankaya, Terzi and Özbay, 2011).

RCMK teachers who participated into the research expressed that they should be in cooperation with information technologies and guidance teachers for the threats their students were possible to experience on social networks. In this sense, these three branches at schools could be provided to carry out common projects and prepare social networks action plan. On social networks, students are also exposed to several harmful applications, phishing attacks, spams, and spam links. Because social networks use free advertisement environments, these pages could be directed to pornographic contents (Varol and Aydin, 2010). In order to be protected from these risks, information technologies teachers, computer teachers and counselling and guidance teachers could be provided to carry out

common projects for raising the awareness of families and students against the physical and metal dangers possible to be experienced on social networks.

Social networks websites also provide benefits for the institutions due to their properties such as enhancing blended learning process of the students, and supporting the learning process of the students and teaching and evaluation process of the teachers (Gülbahar, Kalelioğlu, & Madran, 2010). For that reason, when intense social network use of the students was considered, studies related to the use of social networks for educational purposes should be supported.

- Similar studies could be carried out with different branches' teachers and all the results could be eventually compared.

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